

Message Text

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SUBJ: PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES NEW LAND POLICY PROPOSALS

DEPARTMENT ALSO PASS OPIC AND AID

1. IN A MAJOR SPEECH TO THE RECONVENED PARLIAMENT ON JULY 14, PRESIDENT SIR SERETSE KHAMA ANNOUNCED NEW POLICY PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRIBAL LANDS.

2. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHED BOTSWANA DAILY NEWS ISSUE OF JULY 15 CARRIES ARTICLE ON SPEECH AS PRINCIPAL STORY. HIGH POINTS OF ARTICLE FOLLOW:

"THE POLICY INVOLVES CHANGING THE COMMUNAL GRAZING SYSTEM IN ORDER TO GIVE FARMERS AN INCENTIVE TO PREVENT OVERGRAZING AND TO ALLOW IMPROVED MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, INCLUDING FENCING"

"UNDER THE NEW SYSTEM, LAND BOARDS WILL DIVIDE THE TRIBAL GRAZING AREAS INTO THREE CATAGORIES: COMMERCIAL FARMING AREAS, COMMUNAL GRAZING AREAS, AND RESERVED AREAS"

"IN THE COMMERCIAL AREAS GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS WILL BE GIVEN EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS TO SPECIFIC AREAS OF GRAZING LAND. A LEASE
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WILL BE GIVEN AND RENT WILL BE PAID TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

IN EXCHANGE FOR THE USE OF SUCH LAND".

"IN THE COMMUNAL AREAS THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNAL GRAZING SYSTEM WILL NOT BE CHANGED AND NO RENT WILL BE PAID."

"THE RESERVED AREAS WILL BE SET ASIDE FOR THE FUTURE. THESE, THE PRESIDENT SAID ARE SAFEGUARDS FOR THE POORER MEMBERS OF THE POPULATION AND WILL BE RESERVED FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ONLY A FEW CATTLE OR NONE AT ALL AT PRESENT ..."

"REGARDING THE COMMUNAL AREAS THE PRESIDENT SAID TH HE OBJECTIVE WAS TO PFROTECT THE INTEREST OF THE MAJORITY OF BOTSWANA FARMERS.. THOSE WHO ARE CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN SUBSISTANCE OR NEAR SUBSISTANCE FARMING. HE ADDED THAT THESE ARE CURRENTLY THE MOST OVERGRAZED AREAS ..."

"THE RULES FOR ALLOCATIONS IN COMMERCIAL AREAS, SAID H.E. , WILL ENABLE THE IMPROVED SYSTEM OF MANAGEMENT DEVELLPED BY THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE TO BE INTRODUCED TO RAISE PRODUCTIVITY: IMPROVE MANAGEMENT OF THE VELD: AND ENSURE THAT THE BENEFITS OF THIS ARE NOT REAPED SOLELY BY LARGE INDIVIDUAL STOCKOWNERS, BUT ALSO BY GROUPS OF SMALL OWNERS. THE SIZE OF THE COMMERCIAL AREAS WILL BE DETERMINED WHEN COMMUNAL AND RESERVED REQUIREMENTS ARE MET.."

"THE PAPER IS TO BE DEBATED IN PARLIAMENT AND IN A NATION-WIDE PUBLIC DISCUSSION. THE PRESIDENT EMPHASIZED THAT THE VIEWS OF THE PUBLIC WOULD BE TAKEN FULLY INTO ACCOUNT BEFORE THE POLICY WAS PUT INTO EFFECT. HE SAID THAT "IF ON THE BASIS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION IT APPEARS THAT THE POLICIES NEED TO BE REVISED THEN THIS WILL BE DONE"...

"HE ALSO EMPHASIZED THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT TRIBAL GRAZING LAND WAS EQUITABLY DISTRIBUTED AND THAT SMALLER STOCK OWNERS HAD AN EQUAL CHANCE TO BENEFIT FROM THE GROWTH OF CATTLE INDUSTRY. "IF DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT BENEFIT THE MAJORITY OF BOTSWANA,"SAID SIR SERETSE, "IT IS NOT THE KIND OF DEVELOPMENT WE WANT..."

"THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT IT WOULD TAKE APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS TO GATHER THE DATA AND SURVEY INFORMATION TO BE THE BASIS ON WHCI WHICH THE LAND WOULD BE ZONED. IN THE MEANTIME
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GOVERNMENT WOULD PREPARE A DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR SECURING LOAN FINANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RANCHES BY FARMERS AND PROVIDING THE NECESSARY MATERIALS AND INFRASTRUCTURE, THE PRESIDENT ADDED"

"ALTHOUGH THE POLICY PROPOSALS ARE OPEN TO CHANGE, THE PRESIDENT CAUTIONED THAT IF SOME WANTED AN ASPECT OF THE POLICY CHANGED HE SHOULD HAVE GOOD REASONS FOR IT AND FACTS TO BACK HIM UP"

"THIS MATTER IS FAR TOO IMPORTANT FOR THE PEOPLE TO REACT ON THE BASIS OF RUMOUR OR HALF-CONSIDERED IDEAS," HE SAID. "THE GOVERNMENT WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE FULL AND ACCURATE INFORMATION AND I URGE EVERYONE TO CONSIDER IT THOUGHTFULLY BEFORE MAKING A JUDGEMENT."

3. COMMENT: THE BOTSWANA DAILY NEWS STORY IS AN ACCURATE SUMMARY OF THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS WHICH REPRESENT THE BEGINNING OF A NATION-WIDE EFFORT TO INFORM GENERAL PUBLIC ABOUT NEW LAND POLICY PROPOSALS AND TO INVITE PUBLIC RESPONSE AND COMMENT. TEXT OF PRESIDENT'S SPEECH AND WHITE PAPER ENTITLED "NATIONAL POLICY ON TRIBAL GRAZING LANDS" WILL BE TRANSMITTED WHEN AVAILABLE. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE POLICY PROPOSAL UNDER CONSIDERATION IS REGARDING ONLY TRIBAL LANDS. BOLEN

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